DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 099 038 JC 740 479

AUTHOR Alfred, Richard L.
TITLE Meaningful Research in the Community-Junior College.
PUB DATE 13 Nov 74
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented to the Northeast Region of the Two-Year College Research Group, American Educational Research Association (New York, New York, November 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Action Research; *Community Colleges; *Educational Research; Input Output Analysis; *Junior Colleges; Minority Groups; *Models; Post Secondary Education; *Research Design; School Community Relationship; Social Factors; Speeches

ABSTRACT

A research model to aid community college educators in taking a positive approach to affirmative action is proposed. The input-output model identifies appropriate data elements according to their status as influents on institutional performance in the area of affirmative action. The primary components are political variables (regulations of federal, state, and local agencies), demographic variables (features of the college and community), social psychological variables (features of the individuals in the college and community), and institutional variables (policies and procedures of the college). Each variable can be categorized into one of three classes--input factors, intervening factors, or output factors. Input factors represent the full range of political, demographic, social psychological, and institutional variables that shape college policy in the area of affirmative action. An "expected output" can be determined through analysis of the impact of these variables on institutional policy and procedures (intervening factors) that are used to regulate college performance in minority hiring. This output can be measured through a number of factors (output factors) that define the relationship between the college and the community in terms of prevailing demographic trends. (DB)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED 099038

MEANINGFUL RESEARCH ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY-JUNIOR COLLEGE

by

Richard L. Alfred, Ed. D.
Director of Educational
Research and Development
New York City Community College

to

The Northeast Region of the
Two-Year College Research
Group of the American
Educational Research Association

Columbia University
New York, New York
November 13, 1974

Emerging research trends in the Community-Junior college indicate that several new developments are now beginning to take place. These developments, which are less a matter of research technique than of recognition of the need for research in management decision-making, have resulted in exparded interest among community college educators in quantitative rather than abstract research models. Simply put, the emphasis in higher education on "quantitative" as opposed to "theoretical" research has led to an evolution in educational research from that of a "producer orientation" to that of a "user orientation."

A second trend is the redefinition of functional objectives of educational research conducted in the community college. Educational researchers no longer fall strictly into the "specialist" class in higher education; they are more and

JC 740 479

more recognized as an integral part of the management team that guides the college. Research efforts have shifted to include such concepts as career education, finance models, affirmative action, governance, institutional effectiveness, etc., and the researcher -- outside of his ability to design and conduct objective research studies -- has been called upon to function as both a facilitator and a participant in management decision making. The implications of this trend are quite significant when considered in tandem with the notion that educational research, in the early years of the community the college movement, was more of an adjunct to the college structure than a meaningful part of the management system.

It is with these trends in mind that educational research has taken shape in the community college. Traditional and ongoing fields of research now require new forms of treatment if colleges are to meaningfully serve their clientele. The problem is, however, that management personnel too often fail to recognize the potential hazards that can be caused by improper treatment of social issues, by faulty statistical information, or by a noticeable absence of research information on important issues of the day. When this happens, the oft-repeated criticism of the community college as a "marginal institution" in higher education is catapulted to the forefront. Many believe that the two-year college, although it is designed to serve at the behest of the community, should place greater emphasis on virtues such as "quality" and "scholasticism," and should pay considerably less attention to marginal ideas related to "open admissions" and "community education."

Stated in simple terms, the lack of analytical research on "quality" in the community college is perceived by many as being an achilles heel of the highest order; it subdues understanding of the vital role that educational research can play in management decision making, it produces credibility gaps between the college and its clientele, and it guarantees failure on the part of the college to address itself to important issues that require dialogue.

Affirmative action is one such issue that requires extensive dialogue. The lack of significant early research on minority representation in higher education has led to acute debliities in the community college. A most obvious concomitant is that, by leaving the field of research on affirmative action unturned, community college educators have allowed others -- special interest groups, federal authorities, sociologists, and journalists, for example -- to define for them how they should conduct their affairs in this area. They remain constantly on the defensive. More important, the directions taken by individual colleges in minority hiring and staff development remain unarticulated, hence indeterminate. The irresolute institution fails to lead itself, let alone its community. It is the function of research, therefore, to provide substantive data which can be used by community college faculty and administrators to formulate sound educational decisions on affirmative action. The development of a model for this activity is the subject of this manuscript.

A Thesis

Affirmative action research is an excellent example of quantitative research in higher education. In its present state, it is relatively primitive: it is based strictly on the statistical concept of the frequency distribution, it is "forced-choice" research carried out by the researcher for a management team, it neither creates nor culminates in substantive models for educational research, it is conducted under the supervision of management personnel but also in compliance with directives established by external agencies, it is the subject of immediate audit by external agencies which use the same principles as apply to cash flow auditing, and it tends to reinforce the "traditional" notion of educational research as a monitoring device in the community college.

The problem is that although the community college is an institution about which much has been written, the "idea" of how affirmative action relates to this unique educational institution has rarely been examined. This observation, the groundwork for which is presented above in terms of several of the operational features of affirmative action research, is the primary thesis of this manuscript. Meaningful research on affirmative action in the community college, particularly as it relates to the "community" dimension of the college, is one of the greatest areas of need in higher education.

A Conceptual View of Affirmative Action Research

There can be little doubt that educational researchers, indeed community college educators as a whole, have failed to establish meaningful criteria for substantive research in higher education--research that is concerned with the origins of institutional impact and the place of the two-year college in the life of the student, its faculty, its administrators, and its support personnel. Research traditionally has been grounded on the assumption that specific quantitative dimensions can be used to measure any institution and that once student characteristics are described along with data related to facilities utilization, instructional effectiveness, attrition, follow-up, revenue allocation patterns, enrollment projections, etc., the job is done. Data collection methodologies of this type, of course, do not represent the full range of possibilities for educational research in the community college. Research must be based on certain critical assumptions which affect the very core of the community college as an educational force in American society. It must relate to and support elements of management decision making that are designed to bring the college into line with educational needs and expectations of the community.

In the paradigm model for educational research that has been developed for New York City Community College, affirmative action research relates closely to data needs in three areas; :students, manpower, and the community. Six data bases are proposed in the model -- students, instruction, manpower, community,

facilities, and finance. Research on affirmative action, by design, should be concerned with analysis and interpretation of information related to student composition, community composition, community value orientations, staff composition, and staff attitudes toward the college and the community. Why? The answer is simple: in terms of its importance as one indicator of the profile of the community college as "democracy's college," affirmative action research is an important index of the nature and intensity of the college's involvement in the community.

Using the paradigm model as a base from which to develop strategies for research on affirmative action, a number of assumptions can be drawn which demonstrate the utility of educational research in management decision making. Research on college-community relationships, for example, would probably show that the community college has developed in tandem with community "concepts" (i.e., concepts reflective of community need for programs in continuing education, developmental studies, cultural affairs, etc.). Programs of affirmative action cannot be conducted in isolation from these concepts. Therefore, assumptions used by educational researchers to guide inquiries into the subject of affirmative action must, by necessity, be formulated on the hypothesis that the social community is the determining force underlying all college educational programs and services.

With this hypothesis in mind, the following assumptions for research on affirmative action are presented:

Primary Assumption

PA: The demographic composition of the community college should/should not be a microcosm of the community.

Secondary Assumptions

SA_1: If the community college is to be a microcosm of the community, then the racial, ethnic and sex balance of the college should reflect that of the community.

SA_2: If the community college is not to be a microcosm of the community, then the college should use a national/regional/or local formula to meet affirmative action guidelines.

SA_3: If there is a disparity in racial, ethnic, and sex balance between the college and the community, appropriate steps should/should not be taken to correct the balance.

SA_4: If the affirmative action balance in the community is in constant flux, the community college should/should not continually attempt to change its balance to meet that of the community.

SA_5: If the community college continually attempts to update its affirmative action balance, it should/should not sacrifice "quality" for quantity.

Rarely, if ever, have these assumptions been addressed in the community college. In the face of social and political controversy surrounding implementation of affirmative action programs, the most common approach has been that of developing non-obligatory hiring plans garnished with appropriate support data. Community college educators willing to engage in meaningful research can avoid this dilemma and, in the process, further their understanding of the community.by taking a positive approach to affirmative action. To do this, a research model will need to be developed which does not have as its primary concern the protection of the college from federal and state

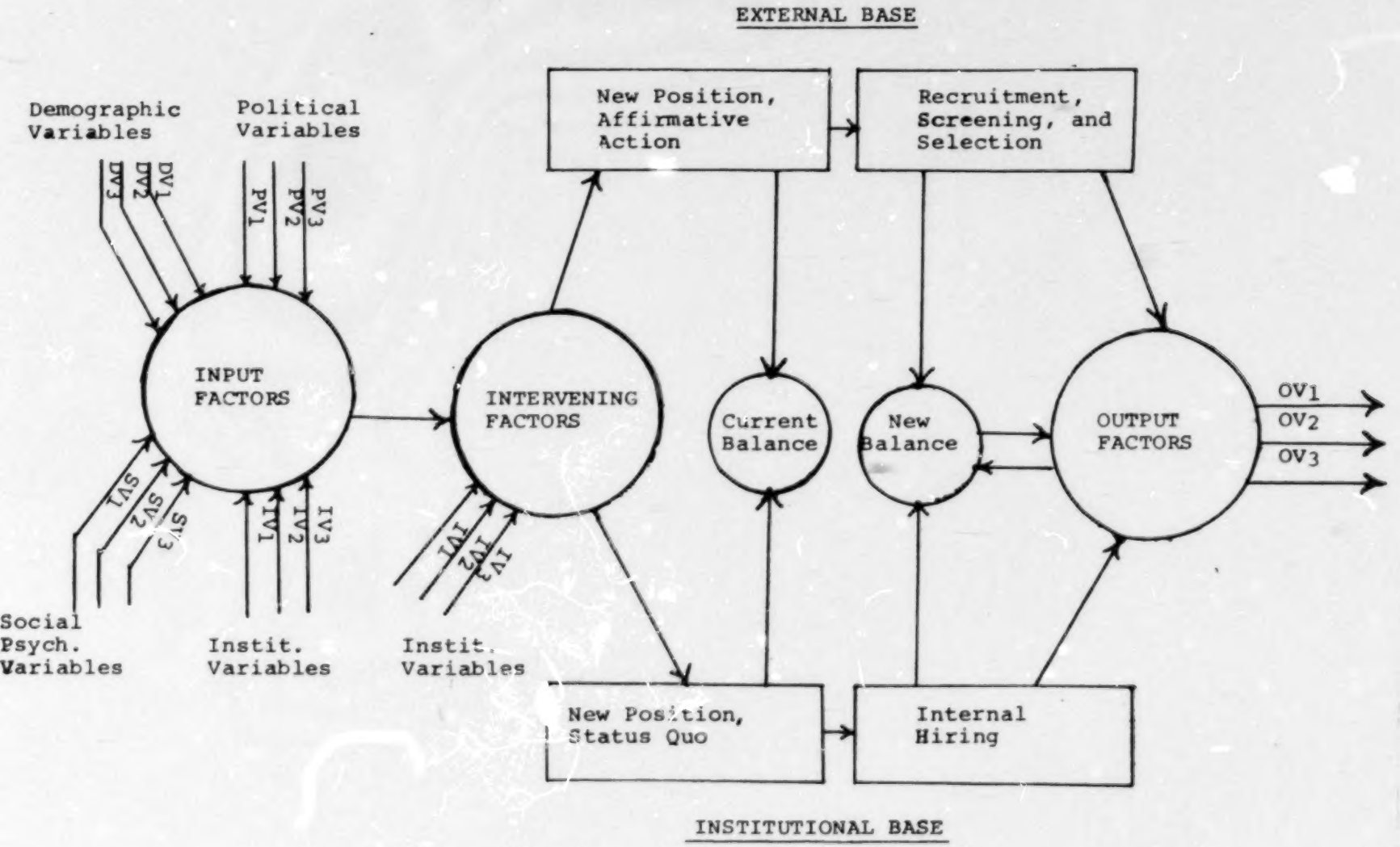
agencies delegated responsibility for review of institutional adherence to affirmative action guidelines.

The remainder of the manuscript is devoted to the presentation of a model of this type. The model is intended for application in the community college; it is non-political in design, and it is based strictly on the need to examine the foregoing assumptions as they relate to current institutional policy. The "output" of the model is the identification of new directions for community college affirmative action programs based on apparent contradictions and consistencies between demographic trends in the college and the community.

The Research Model

It is the function of research to provide substantive data which can be used by faculty and administrators in the community college to formulate sound educational decisions on affirmative action. Data are not always easily obtained and manipulated, however, as there are a number of data elements that need to be considered as part of a model for research on affirmative action. Putting some of the elements into the framework of a schematic diagram (figure I), it is possible to observe the range and scope of affirmative action research. The input-output model presented in the diagram identifies appropriate data elements according to their status as influents on institutional performance in the area of affirmative action. The primary components are political variables (i.e., regulations of federal, state, and local agencies); demographic variables (i.e., features of the college and community); social psychological variables (i.e.,

FIGURE I. SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF A MODEL FOR RESEARCH ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



features of the individuals in the college and community); and institutional variables (i.e., policies and procedures of the college). These variables require research treatment from an assortment of personnel in the college, and each variable can be categorized into one of three classes--input factors, intervening factors, or output factors. Input factors represent the full range of political, demographic, social psychological, and institutional variables which shape college policy in the area of affirmative action. An "expected output" can be determined through analysis of the impact of these variables on institutional policy and procedures (i.e., intervening factors) which are used to regulate college performance in minority hiring. This output can be measured through a number of factors (i.e., output factors) which the define the relationship between the college and the community in terms of prevailing demographic trends.

The need at present is for meaningful output data that can be used to determine whether or not institutional performance in affirmative action is responsive to the needs of the special interest groups within the community as well as the community in general. The output variables that require consideration in this regard are presented in Table I. If baseline research data pertaining to these variables, can be collected, community college educators can begin to establish viable institutional formulas for affirmative action programs. These formulas can be based on community demography, institutional demography, or a combination of both. Whatever the

TABLE I - Variables for research on affirmative action programs in the community college

FACTOR IDENTIFICATION	CLASS	VARIABLE
Input Factors	Political Variables	Research on existing federal and state regulations on affirmative action *published regulations *interviews *workshops and meetings
	Demographic Variables	Research on community characteristics *race *ethnicity *sex *age *employment status *type of occupation *income *level of education *type of housing *veteran status
		Research on characteristics of college faculty, administrators, and support staff *race *ethnicity *sex *age *salary *level of education *veteran status
	Social psychological variables	Research on community attitudes toward race and ethnicity *community perceptions *community value systems *community goals
	Institutional Variables	Research on academic and experiential backgrounds necessary for existing academic, administrative, and staff positions *level of education *experience prerequisites *publications
Intervening Factors	Institutional Variables	Research on new positions necessary in college organizational structure *academic *administrative *staff

TABLE I (cont'd)

FACTOR INDENTIFICATION	CLASS	VARIABLE
Intervening Factors (cont'd)	Institutional Variables (cont'd)	Research on educational, experiential, and salary requirements of new positions *level of education *experience *salary Research on institutional hiring mechanisms currently used to fill academic, administrative, and staff positions *job descriptions *advertising techniques *screening committees *interviews *selection *executive approval Research on availability of minority personnel with or without credentials for open positions *within community *outside of community *out-of-state *international Research on existing communication mechanisms between the college and minority segments of the community *forms of communication *extensiveness of communication *direction of communication *motivational quality of communication
Output Factors	Institutional Variables	Research on the congruency between minority ratios in the college and the community Research on formulas for minority ratios that could be adopted by the college *data on minority ratios in regional and national community colleges *data on minority ratios in regional business and industry *data on federal and local new formulas for minority representation *data on college and community perceptions of various formulas for minority hiring

TABLE I (cont'd)

FACTOR IDENTIFICATION	CLASS	VARIABLE
Output Factors (cont'd)	Institutional Variables (cont'd)	Research on the impact of affirmative action programs in the college and the community after implementation of appropriate formulas agreed upon by college personnel Research on staff development programs that will be necessary to train incumbent and new employees following implementation of formula-based affirmative action programs Research on indications of organizational efficiency and harmony following implementation of the affirmative action program

choice, however, formulas for hiring of minority personnel adopted for use in the community college will have significant impact on the relationship of the college to its community. The implications of this phenomenon for the educational researcher are discussed in the section that follows.

Conclusions and Implications

The model for research proposed in this manuscript is predicated on the assumption that the community college is part and parcel of the social community--indeed it may even be a microcosm of the community--and that precedent to the implementation of a meaningful program of research on affirmative action is the need for the college to re-examine its relationship to the community. Whether the college is to lead the community or the community is to lead the college in minority representation is a matter that needs to be decided by management personnel. The fact is, however, that neither college personnel nor community inhabitants can afford to ignore one another on such an important social issue as affirmative action.

Techniques of educational research must be brought to bear on various dimensions of the issue and comprehensive baseline data should be established and used to assist management personnel in decision-making appropriate to affirmative action programs. The problem is that educational researchers have devoted too much time and energy to simple quantitative manipulations of numerical research data (i.e., minority staff

ratios, positon openings, staff salary benefits, credential prerequisites, etc.), and have failed to distinguish the need for research related to community expectations and institutional policy. Research on quantitative indicators of institutional adherence to affirmative action guidelines established by external agencies is "shopkeeping research" at best -- the type of research that consumes time but really does little for institutional development. Emphasis should be placed on "educational research" that can be used to influence the direction and intensity of college-community relationships. Until educational researchers turn their attention to this concept of research, their output on affirmative action will be nothing more than a meaningless procession of statistical reports.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIF.
LOS ANGELES

DEC 20 1974

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION